

# WHAT TWO OF AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE THEATRE CHARACTERS ARE DOING TODAY...

## Grahame Bond: From Aunty Jack to 'Captain Bloody'



**Aunty Jack's most devoted fans won't recognize her now she's a fairy godperson**

**I**t's been a while since Grahame Bond hung up the golden boxing glove of his Aunty Jack days, but all the energy, wit and enthusiasm he used to create that much-loved, if menacing, character are a long way from retirement.

These days they are devoted to his latest project, a stage musical called "Captain Bloody", which combines all the madness of "The Aunty Jack Show" with the fun of a good old-fashioned pantomime.

Its hero is a Walter Mitty of the High Seas, a Don Quixote tilting at main masts in defence of a fair lady and romantic ideals.

There are good guys and bad guys, a fairy godperson (Grahame) and enough toe-tapping music to keep audiences rocking in their seats.

Grahame is clearly back in his element with this latest production, which he co-wrote with Jim Burnett. As well as starring in and directing it, he composed the music.

"Captain Bloody" marks his return to the stage after a stint working as creative director of an advertising agency, a position which he gave up last year when he found it was monopolizing his time.

The show centres on the adventures of Eric Bloode, an aptly-named doctor whose one ambition in life is to be Errol Flynn. He joins a closet heroes' club which is run by a man who thinks he's Winston Churchill and a vice-president who believes he is John Wayne.



**Grahame Bond as himself (above), the redoubtable Aunty Jack (left), the fairy godperson (right).**

The trouble starts when Eric's wicked step-brother, Bartholomew Noir, tries to join the club as Adolf Hitler. He is rejected by Winston Churchill, whom he then kills with Eric's sword.

Eric is thrown into prison where he meets his fairy godperson, portrayed by Grahame as a sort of "Arr matey" bosun.

The bosun grants Eric's wish to become a hero, and transforms him into the swashbuckling Captain Bloody. In his new persona, Eric sets out to save the not-so-sweet heroine, Arabella (whose theme song is "Show me a man I can walk over and I'll show you my man"), from the clutches of Black Bart, alias Bartholomew Noir.

The show opens in Sydney this month for an eight-week run before a planned tour of Canberra, Adelaide, Melbourne, Queensland and Darwin.

Grahame positively lights up when discussing the show. It is obvious that his work means more to him than simply a string of comedy routines enlivened by a menagerie of eccentric characters.

He is serious about what he does and tries to provide more than just a



pleasant few hours' entertainment. His aim is to leave his audiences with a feeling of optimism and hope for the future.

He promotes this at the end of "Captain Bloody" by asking the audience to vote on Eric's right to live out his fantasies and be what he wants to be, without being forced to succumb to the harshness of reality.

Grahame's last television venture was a one-hour special for Network Ten, "The Grahame Bond Show", in 1982. Although this also featured a character called Captain Bloody, the stage version is different, he said.

Before that, Grahame spent two and a half years appearing in his musical production, "Boys Own McBeth".

The Sydney season of "Captain Bloody" will be nostalgic for Grahame. It will be staged at the Footbridge Theatre, on the fringes of the Sydney University campus, where Grahame performed for the first time around 20 years ago.

He had graduated as an architect and was working as a tutor at the university when he became involved in the university revues. It wasn't long before he decided that showbusiness was the life for him, and he hasn't looked back.

"The Aunty Jack Show", with Grahame as the leading lady forever threatening to rip people's arms off, brought him instant success. It led to a variety of spin-off programmes.

Grahame still has a special fondness for the Aunty Jack character — although it seems unlikely that he will resurrect her.

After "Captain Bloody", he is considering doing another musical which will possibly be followed by a one-man show.

— JAN GOLDIE